



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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FARMERS AND RANCHERS REMINDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATION'S 26TH CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3, 2003 - Your agriculture census report form wouldn't be hiding, would it? If so, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman urges farmers and ranchers to complete and return their forms today to **make it known – agriculture counts!**

"The Nation's agricultural sector has a critical stake in this census of agriculture," said Veneman. "Whether a large feedlot or a very small fruit and vegetable farm, every response is important because it helps in the development of future farm programs. We encourage participants to return completed forms as soon as possible to ensure that Agriculture counts."

Veneman points out that an accurate report of the farm operations in every state and county will help put together a complete, detailed picture of the Nation's agriculture. Everyone receiving a report form across the Nation's 3,000 plus counties must report by law (Title 7, U.S. Code). Snapshots of U.S. agriculture dating back to 1840 are a valuable resource to farmers, farm organizations, agribusiness, farm media, and county, state and federal governments.

Census data are used to:

- S examine long-term trends and anticipate the future direction of agriculture.
- S allocate local and national funds for farm programs.
- S help agribusiness develop sales territories and marketing plans for fertilizer, seed, processing, storage, transportation, and equipment.
- S help State and Federal government agencies evaluate effects of changes in farm legislation.
- S assess patterns in water use and irrigation to determine resource and management needs.
- S allocate cooperative extension funding, services, and research at the local level.

Anyone needing help completing their report form may call 1-888-4AG-STAT.

Results from the 2002 Census of Agriculture will be published on Feb. 3, 2004. They will be available on www.usda.gov/nass/, through your local NASS State office, as well as from many libraries and land grant universities. Individual reports are held strictly confidential by law (Title 7, U.S. Code).

NOTE TO EDITORS: For background information and sample 2002 Census report forms, and for data from the last Census, visit www.nass.usda.gov/census/. Public service announcements, news releases, editorials and similar materials may be found by clicking on "Help Us Promote the 2002 Census" or by calling 1-800-727-9540 or by contacting your local State Statistical Office at www.usda.gov/nass/ under "State Information."

Find agricultural statistics for your county, State, and the Nation at www.usda.gov/nass/.